

the call of duty to provide valuable benefits to the people of Kentucky. Because of their unwavering commitment to helping others, the Social Security Administration recognized the Middlesboro Office as the Best Level II Field Office in the Atlanta Region for fiscal year 2002.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues and myself, I want to thank the staff at the Middlesboro Social Security Office for their hard work and dedication to serving the people of Kentucky. These fine Americans are an inspiration to us all, and I salute them for their commitment to helping others.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MILWAUKEE QUALIFIES FOR THE SCHOOL'S FIRST NCAA TOURNAMENT

### HON. GERALD D. KLECZKA

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 18, 2003*

Mr. KLECZKA. MR. Speaker, On Tuesday, March 11, 2003, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Men's Basketball team qualified for the NCAA tournament by defeating the Butler University Bulldogs. The Panthers (24-7) are making their first-ever appearance in the NCAA Tournament, and gained an automatic berth into the field with a 69-52 win over Butler in the championship game of the Horizon League Tournament. UWM will be seeded number 12 in the West Region of the NCAA Tournament.

This outstanding achievement is a proud moment for the university, alumni, students, and the community. I would like to join with the UWM family in recognizing this enormous accomplishment, and it's with great pride that I offer my congratulations and applaud their efforts.

Tournament MVP Clay Tucker scored a game-high 23 points in leading the No. 2 seed University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee over No. 1 seed Butler University in the championship game. He also had team-high eight rebounds to go with game-bests in assists (4), steals (4), and blocks (2).

UWM's Head Basketball Coach Bruce Pearl coaching talents have been recognized nationally. In the May 1999 issue of Sport Magazine, Coach Pearl was listed as one of the "Five Head Coaches on the Rise," placing him in a group with Paul Hewitt (Georgia Tech), Mike Brey (Notre Dame), and Buzz Peterson (Tennessee).

Before coming to coach the UWM Panthers, Coach Pearl ended 14 years as an assistant at the University of Iowa. Prior to coaching at Iowa, he was an assistant coach at Stanford, and, at the age of 23, was promoted to Associate Head Coach at Stanford. Bruce Pearl helped lay the groundwork for the resurgence in men's basketball at Stanford.

So, I am pleased to join with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to recognize the Men's Basketball Team for their notable play and excitement for the community at large and the State of Wisconsin.

TRIBUTE TO COLONEL GARY D. JERAULD

### HON. ROBERT E. (BUD) CRAMER, JR.

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 18, 2003*

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Colonel Gary D. Jerauld upon his retirement after more than 26 years of outstanding service to our country in the United States Army. After his effective retirement date of June 30, 2003, Col. Jerauld will reside in my Congressional district.

Colonel Gary D. Jerauld has distinguished himself throughout his military service in challenging and diverse assignments. Throughout his remarkable career, he has received many medals and awards for his ability to lead by example, encourage excellence from his peers and subordinates, effectively manage the Army's resources, and consistently produce outstanding results. I commend Col. Jerauld for his ability to energize a diverse staff toward a common purpose, setting high standards and inspiring his staff to achieve them.

Colonel Jerauld has been assigned to several key military positions throughout his career, which culminated as the Project Manager for the Tactical Operations Centers (TOCs) and Air and Missile Defense Command and Control Systems (AMDCCS), a position he has held since 1999. It is in this role that Col. Jerauld will leave an enduring mark on the future of our Army.

One example of his unique leadership abilities occurred in March 2000, when he was given the mission: "Restructure A2C2S into an executable program, place the system in the hands of the user now, and field to the First Digitized Division in Fiscal Year 2003." In just over one year, Colonel Jerauld and his team stood up the A2C2S Product Manager position and office, restructured the program, deployed an A2C2S demonstrator system to the 4th Infantry Division, and awarded a competitive contract for system integration. Colonel Jerauld has built a reputation as a Project Manager for delivering quality products to the field in much less time normally required for design, fabrication, and delivery.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of North Alabama, I congratulate Colonel Jerauld for his 26 years of service to our country and I welcome him to our North Alabama community.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 1309, "VETERANS PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFITS ACT OF 2003"

### HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 18, 2003*

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing H.R. 1309, "The Veterans Prescription Drug Benefits Act of 2003", legislation which will provide a revolutionary change in veterans' medical care.

"The Veterans Prescription Drug Benefits Act of 2003" would allow veterans to be the first among America's seniors and disabled people to have a real, meaningful Medicare outpatient drug benefit. If our nation is serious

about implementing a drug benefit for seniors, the legislation I am introducing today would speed the availability of a prescription drug benefit and could even result in savings for the Medicare trust fund by allowing VA to employ its considerable prescription drug purchasing and benefit management skills in administering the benefit for veterans who are Medicare eligible. Additionally, this legislation would realign VA health care, allowing VA to concentrate its health care assets on the many veterans who rely upon it for the majority of their care needs.

"The Veterans Prescription Drug Benefits Act of 2003" would, for the first time, allow veterans to bring prescriptions ordered by physicians who are not affiliated with the Department of Veterans Affairs to the VA to be filled. It would also require the Medicare trust fund to pay the cost of this new benefit for veterans who choose it and who are also eligible for Medicare Part A and enrolled in Medicare Part B.

Recently the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has decided to restrict enrollment of higher income veterans to those who were enrolled prior to January 17, 2002. Consequently, this legislation would allow veterans who no longer have the option of receiving a full continuum of health care services to receive subsidized prescription drug coverage from VA.

Providing, this new drug benefit to Medicare eligible veterans could also have the effect of eliminating the enormous queues that have developed as higher income veterans have flooded the system to seek inexpensive prescription drugs. As of the end of January, about 202,000 veterans had waited longer than six months for a first primary care visit or for necessary follow up care. Many of these veterans are likely to be Priority 7 or 8 veterans who constituted more than 75 percent of VA's new users in 2002. Offering these veterans an opportunity for new drug coverage without first obtaining an appointment with a VA provider could have the effect of significantly reducing or entirely eliminating these waiting times. In fiscal year 2002, VA estimates almost 900,000 veterans used the VA health care primarily or exclusively to fill drug prescriptions who would also be likely to take advantage of a new prescription drug benefit.

At the end of 2000, VA's Office of Inspector General (IG) advised "VHA can reduce the cost impact of providing prescriptions to priority group 7 veterans, make additional resources available for veterans healthcare, and enhance the delivery of prescription services to veterans." (Audit of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Pharmacy Co-Payment Levels and Restrictions on Filling Privately Written Prescriptions for Priority Group 7 Veterans, Report No. 99-00057-4, December 20, 2000) This report suggested that VA could have saved more than \$1.3 billion in fiscal year 2001 by eliminating the need for VA to re-examine veterans who have already received examinations and tests to receive prescriptions from private physicians. These savings were projected only for Priority 7 veterans, who were, at that time the group with the lowest priority for care. For all veterans, the IG might project even higher savings.

While cognizant of his IG's finding, Secretary Anthony J. Principi testified before the Committee on Veterans Affairs that he believed that the IG did not factor in the additional costs of new demand for the prescription drug benefit. His response when asked